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## ABSTRACT

The cultural conditioning which specifies and limits women's roles not only pervades secondary and higher educational practices, but is actually reinforced by current guidance practices. Bias against women's attainment is perpetuated by the very experts who counsel women. Socialization and sex stereotyping lead to both quantitative and qualitative differences in self concept between men and women. Although approximately half of the guidance counselors in elementary and secondary schools are women, counselor educators are overwhelmingly white and male. This has strong implications, borne out by studies, that counselors hold negative expectations for women and minorities. In addition, counselors' theoretical underpinnings, the materials they use, and the culture in which they live are all sex-biased, often ignoring the special factors that affect women. A number of organizations are undertaking programs to remedy sexism in women's education and guidance counseling. Such efforts must be strongly supported by the State and Federal governments, as well as by institutions and professional organizations. Since high school and college women arrive in the counselors' offices already socialized into considering only traditional education and careers, equity in education must be the goal. (Author/GC)

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# SEX DISCRIMINATION IN GUIDANCE & COUNSELING

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Report Review  
and  
Action Recommendations

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON  
WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

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The narrative portion of this pamphlet draws on the report *Sex Discrimination in Guidance and Counseling* and does not necessarily represent positions or policies of the Education Division, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Action Recommendations adopted by the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs may be found on p. 8.

## INTRODUCTION

The Women's Educational Equity Act, passed in 1974, directed the U.S. Commissioner of Education to prepare a "national comprehensive report on sex discrimination in education" to be submitted to the Presidentially-appointed National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs. The Council was mandated to make recommendations, based on this report, to the Commissioner.

Consequently, the Commissioner authorized three studies to be prepared by nationally recognized experts:

- \* *Professional Employment in Education*, by Roslyn Kane
- \* *Access to Postsecondary Education*, by the Higher Education Research Institute
- \* *Sex Discrimination in Guidance and Counseling*, by the Higher Education Research Education Institute

Based on these reports, the Advisory Council made extensive recommendations for action by Federal, State, local and private agencies to move toward educational equity for women and girls at every level of education.

The material in this pamphlet is derived from the report *Sex Discrimination in Guidance and Counseling*. Also included here are the specific recommendations to alleviate sex bias in educational counseling. In the interests of space, footnotes and bibliographic reference are not included. The complete 291-page report, and its annotated bibliography, is available through Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), as are the other two reports.

Copies of the general recommendations on sex discrimination in education which the Council sent to the Commissioner of Education may be obtained, on request, from the Council.

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs hopes that this brochure will contribute to public understanding of the complex issues of sex bias in education resulting from educational counseling, and of potential measures to remedy these deep-seated and pervasive problems.

## OVERVIEW

The cultural conditioning which specifies and limits women's roles not only pervades secondary and higher educational practices, it is actually reinforced by current guidance practices.

To understand where women are in educational opportunities, one must start by considering the educational culture—as well as the general culture—in which women develop. Where do they get their ideas on what education and careers they can and should attain? Who and what influences them? Who advises their advisors? What is the message, most importantly, of these influences? The answer: the message is sexism. Bias against women's attainments in certain areas of higher education—reinforced by the very experts who counsel women—is found throughout secondary and postsecondary education.

Although counseling is expected to "open up" the world to students, exposing them to all possible options, it often influences them to limit

career considerations because of sex. The bias can be open (suggestions that "women just aren't good at math") or subtle (an understanding that "girls always are" . . . a certain way).

Since high school and college women arrive in the counselors' offices already socialized into considering only traditional education and careers, equity in education—not equal treatment—must be the goal. That is, counselors need to do more than explore options with women students. They need to develop affirmative action programs to urge women to seek non-traditional careers, and to ensure that young women develop to their fullest potentials.

## **SOCIALIZATION MAKES US WHAT WE ARE**

How does our culture pattern males into men and females into women? There are myths and proven facts. It's clear that some sex differences appear in verbal, visual-spatial, and mathematical abilities and in aggression. But it has yet to be proven that girls are more "social" and "suggestible" than boys; that girls are auditory, boys visual; that boys are more analytical; or that there are sex differences in perception, learning and memory.

Socializing and steering children into sex-typed behavior are parents, children's literature, television and teachers. How does this happen? Parents encourage their children to develop sex-typed interests and give them sex-typed toys.

In books, women are either underrepresented or cast in traditional roles. Television often shows women in negative, traditional ways. The more numerous men are shown as competent and dominant.

At school, not only are texts filled with stereotypes, but teachers may treat boys and girls differently. Boys get more attention—negative as well as positive. And as early as kindergarten, some play things may be reserved for boys or girls.

Where do students turn for advice? Boys discuss post-high school plans with their fathers, while girls consult with mothers, siblings, friends and other adults. Counselors, teachers, principals and clergy advise both boys and girls.

## **HOW WOMEN SEE THEMSELVES**

How does a woman see herself—her life chances and choices—by the time she reaches high school age? She may be ready to achieve only in areas she has been trained to consider right for her sex. Her drive to achieve may be stunted by the sex-typing she's already received. Her early socializers have encouraged docility and conformance. By this time, studies show, girls have lower educational hopes than boys.

Self estimates in one study show women and men at variance, with women high on their creativity and human relations traits, and men rating themselves high on academic achievement-oriented traits.

On the same test, black men and women rated themselves lower—compared to white youths—on academic ability, mathematical ability,

mechanical ability, and—to some extent—originality. However, drive to achieve and self confidence self-ratings were comparable.

Clearly, women are deeply influenced by the expectations of their men and women friends. Believing that men prefer traditional homemakers, women may hold off seeking work. Also, knowing that success outside the home is not highly valued, even by other women, they may be inhibited from career achievement.

## **CULTURE MOLDS THE COUNSELORS TOO**

What kind of persons are the counselors? What socialization—by race and sex—what training and certification do they bring to guiding young people?

White men are in the majority of counselor educators, as well as counselors in practice. Some figures: 85 percent of counselor educators are men (figures from 94 percent of counselor education institutions). Of the 68 percent of the membership which indicated their sex on the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision form, 67 percent are male and 33 percent female. Half the members indicated race, showing that they were 90 percent white and 10 percent black. The Higher Education Research Institute found that only two of 26 responding counselor education departments have a female director, and that 83 percent of these counselor education faculties are men.

Other problems in the counseling of women and girls relate to the texts which train the counselors and to the scarcity of courses on counseling females. For example, graduate texts in psychology, a survey shows, have few women scholars in the texts, fewer subjects of psychological research are women, and the texts show limited career roles associated with women. There is little discussion of sex differences or sex roles. More text referred to men than women, and—where women were mentioned—it was in stereotyped terms. A lack of training in counseling minorities is also prevalent.

Among those practicing their profession of counseling, the American Personnel and Guidance Association reports 52 percent of its membership are women. (Not all polled specified their sex, however.) A 1974 survey of guidance and counseling divisions in state departments of education shows that 65 percent of elementary counselors and 43 percent of secondary counselors are women. Of those responding to a National Longitudinal Study survey, 93 percent said they were white.

## **COUNSELORS' ATTITUDES ARE MIXED**

Counselors often—as do other mental health professionals—hold negative or ambivalent attitudes toward women. These attitudes are seen in the double standard of mental health, namely, different concepts of what constitutes mental health in a man and in a woman. Men counselors see the college-bound girls in traditionally feminine, semi-skilled occupations, while female counselors see them as interested in college-level occupations. Both men and women professionals, however, are biased against women entering male fields.

## **WHAT DO COUNSELORS LIVE BY? (Tests, Materials, Theories)**

Counselors' theoretical underpinnings, the materials they use and the culture in which they live are all found to be sex-biased.

The world through test developers' eyes is the man's occupational world. Thus, the woman's chances are seen as limited. Sex bias in tests, materials and theories which counselors use is serious. For example, achievement test batteries use more references to men than to women, and show women only as homemakers or in pursuit of hobbies. There is an implication that most professions are shut to women.

Interest inventories show sex bias. The Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB) uses a separate form, with different career options for men and women and different scoring requirements for the same occupations. The SVIB manual indicates that options for women are limited and accepts the status quo of women's roles. The Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII) improves on the SVIB by combining items into one booklet and removing reference to gender. The Kuder Occupational Interest Survey (KOIS) has wording problems similar to those of the SVIB in that it restricts the choices for women.

Criticism of the Self-Directed Search follows lines similar to that leveled at the SVIB and the KOIS.

These interest surveys, furthermore, are even more irrelevant for the minority woman whose experiences have forced her into different interests and directions from the white woman.

Use of masculine examples, focusing on the male users of the materials and test takers, and use of masculine pronouns are widespread in the various manuals, thus reinforcing the idea that the world of work is for men only.

Guidance texts give little attention to problems of sex bias. Generally, guidance specialists do not see women's working as having identity and growth aspects.

Career materials are equally one-sided, showing mostly men in high professional or managerial positions where they perform exciting, challenging tasks and work on their own—assisted perhaps by women.

Another group of publications aimed mainly at men is the college catalog. In an HERI survey, four-year colleges and universities present the greatest disparity in their treatment of the sexes. The most even-handed treatment is provided by proprietary institution catalogs.

Illustrations frequently show women alone in dance or exercise—almost never in technical labs. Men are almost always the only people pictured in contact sports. As for faculty and administrators pictured, they, too, are usually men.

## **GUIDANCE THEORIES: WHAT'S IN THOSE TEXTS?**

The practice of guidance itself is flawed and skewed, based mainly on psychological theory which itself appears sex-biased. Moreover, theoretical formulations about personality development are often irrelevant to minorities and women.

## COUNSELING THEORY AND THE SEXES

The special forces affecting women's career development are ignored in several theories dealing with career development. Much of counseling theory is the heritage of Freud, a sex-biased foundation for the practice of guidance. Guidance assumptions about women are not examined.

Moreover, the personality theories ignore the importance of socialization in developing sex-role behavior. Such traditional theorists and theories see problems as existing in the person, and not in the society in which the individual must live.

Sex-fair counseling requires changes:

- \* Counseling theories must include such issues as sex difference, psychology of women, sex-role stereotypes and societal norms for healthy, acceptable behavior by women and men.
- \* Theories must admit that the client doesn't need to adjust—rather, the change is needed in society and in sex-role expectations.

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs is convinced that men's career development must no longer take center stage, with women's vocational development and concerns either ignored or treated as trivial corollaries.

## IMPACT OF COUNSELING

The impact of counseling on the clients is not clear. Interviews with students and a review of counselors' own studies revealed that only about one-fifth of the men and women responding sought guidance services, with women slightly more likely than men to seek such services. There was dissatisfaction with the service.

Another study among high school students reported them to feel that the counselors and teachers favor the college-bound. Most students in that study agreed that little staff time was spent on their personal and academic problems. When college students reported on their high school counseling, only about one-third said it reflected their needs, with white men most satisfied and black women least satisfied. They did not, however, see the counselors as prejudiced toward blacks or women. Sex bias in terms of omission rather than commission, by not informing them of certain career possibilities, was seen.

Counselors just don't rank high for any kind of advice: emotional, educational, vocational, with college students, says one survey.

One study concludes client satisfaction with counseling, and reports that clients get better grades.

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Although sexism still reigns in the educating and counseling of men and women—and in the educating of counselors—it is encouraging that some educators, parents, counselors, researchers, school boards, professional associations, and governments are tackling the problem. While home and

school are the seedbed of sexism and sexist conditioning, many parents and teachers are already searching for and using new concepts. Enlightened school task forces pinpoint sexist practices and call for equitable treatment.

As for professional stereotypes, an American Personnel and Guidance Association investigation on the status of women in the APGA will lead to improved affirmative action. Definitions of sex bias and a guide to assess sex bias in interest inventories were developed by the Association for Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance (AMEG) Commission on Sex Bias in Measurement. The National Institute of Education in 1975 published a report, *Issues of Sex Bias and Sex Fairness in Career Interest Measurement*.

An American Psychological Association task force has identified four areas of sex bias in psychotherapy and counseling:

- \* fostering traditional sex roles,
- \* bias in expectations and devaluation of women,
- \* sexist use of psychoanalytic concepts,
- \* responding to female clients as sex objects, including seduction.

Alternative counseling programs work to raise sex-role consciousness of both counselors and clients. Counseling models try to help a woman plan life realistically, and use her potential in the job that's right for her.

Nonsexist curricular materials and activities are flowing from counselors, associations, feminist groups and private publishers. However, getting them used is another—and crucial—matter.

New counseling techniques, such as assertiveness training, help women break out of restrictive socialization and sex-role stereotypes.

New ways are being developed by psychologists, counselors and psychiatrists. Three major directions in developing a sensitive counseling approach supportive of women are:

- \* constructing a developmental psychology of women,
- \* identifying and analyzing the negative consequences for women of their socialization,
- \* providing alternative ways to counsel women.

## **ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs commends to the Commissioner of Education and, through him, to agencies, institutions and individuals, a variety of activities intended to provide guidance and counseling which would be truly equitable for women and men, girls and boys.

### **Federal Policy**

Screen governmental publications which have career or vocational impact for overt or covert sex bias. Where necessary rewrite to present affirmatively sex fair publications.

### **Oversight**

1. Support, by letter of the Commissioner of the Office of Education to the

professional associations, American Personnel and Guidance Associations (APGA) and the American Psychological Association (APA), the inclusion of courses in counseling girls and women and minorities in all counseling training programs.

2. Assist in development of high quality state certification standards and support courses in sex fair and racially fair counseling techniques for certification.
3. Support inservice training for counselors employed at all educational levels to:
  - a. retrain counselor educators concerning changing roles of women and men in the family and in the larger society.
  - b. combat incorrect assumptions regarding women and careers.
  - c. provide information on the implications of sex role research to combat sex stereotypic attitudes.
  - d. counteract sex bias in every counseling tool including evaluation instruments, career brochures, college catalogs.
  - e. develop techniques to confront and counteract stereotypic assumptions of students and of parents.
  - f. develop and disseminate inservice training materials.

### **Sub-National Policy**

#### **State**

1. Require courses on non-sexist counseling for certification. Those already trained should be required to take inservice training on non-sexist counseling.

### **Institutions/Professional Organizations**

1. Review textbooks used in graduate training of counselors for sex bias, disseminate results, provide guidelines for publishers.
2. Prepare systematic analysis for sex bias of evaluation instruments used at all levels of education.
3. Review and rewrite as necessary all catalogs and brochures to eliminate overt and covert sex bias.
4. Develop methods to infuse required courses with sex fair materials and concepts (e.g., courses on tests and measurement or psychological testing should train counselors to recognize and counteract sex bias presently embedded in evaluation instruments.)
5. Offer special courses on the counseling needs of girls and women.
6. Hire and promote female counselor educators and administrators commensurate with their presence in the field. (Many more women earn doctorates in areas that are appropriate for counselor positions than are hired for such positions.)
7. Encourage counselors to work to expose social myths and restrictive stereotypes that limit individual potential.

## **Publishers**

1. Develop bias free tests.
2. Develop and make available special guidance curricula and materials which are sex fair for the elementary school level.
3. Encourage bias free textbooks. Existing readers and textbooks should be revised to eliminate sexist material.

## **Research**

1. Develop new guidance materials, films and pamphlets which are sex fair.
2. Analyze particular educational counselor characteristics which result in differential treatment by sex or in sex fair counseling outcomes. (Care must be taken in such research to avoid traditional measurements of counseling outcomes which are encrusted with sex bias.)
3. Conduct national study of interaction between counselor and students to trace "messages" being delivered by counselors and received by students.
4. Evaluate existing theoretical works as effective explanations of achievement motivation of women.
5. Analyze and evaluate the vocational school counseling process, as it supports the status quo rather than encouraging non-sex stereotyped occupational training.
6. Investigate effects on women of outreach programs assigning counselors to certain subjects or to particular subject majors, i.e., male counselors assigned to the school of engineering and women counselors to the nursing school.
7. Study effect on college women of hierarchy of acceptability for student counseling: i.e., top status to personality counseling and second class status to vocational counseling. Consider linkage of this effect with the possibility that women disproportionately need help with practical vocational counseling to overcome the effects of past sex role stereotyping and educational sex discrimination, but disproportionately avail themselves of personality counseling.
8. Analyze the role of minorities in the total counseling field, including non-Black minorities. The lack of research on Native Americans is particularly salient.
9. Investigate proprietary schools, many of which operate through guaranteed student loans, veteran's benefits, and other sources of Federal funding, to assure educational equity. Such institutions should be required to meet sex-fair standards if they wish accreditation from agencies—e.g., National University Extension Association and the National Association of Independent Schools—which receive their authority with approval of the Commissioner of Education.

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